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ABSTRACT

Integrating reading and writing at the primary level is important because writing and then reading back what has been written gives purpose to both, and the sense of overall purpose enhances reading while the sense of audience enhances writing. Another reason for starting this integration with beginning students is that writing creates a purpose for paying attention to features of written language such as letter-sound correspondences, the ordering of letters in words, and the left-to-right nature of English print, all of which is knowledge used in reading. It also emphasizes the interdependence of reading and writing rather than creating the illusion of division between the two. Accomplishing the integration can be achieved through reading aloud and sharing writing with students often, and by encouraging all student attempts to read and write. By encouraging writing from the first day of school, teachers can avoid the resistance that often occurs when writing is introduced later in the year. Having the students read back their attempts at writing will help even the less-developed writers think of themselves as authors. Other recommended techniques include (1) writing on a broad range of topics, (2) encouraging a studio atmosphere, (3) using the language experience approach's prewriting and brainstorming activities, (4) making use of semantic mapping, (5) encouraging creativity and emphasizing the idea that there is no single right way to write about a given subject, (6) viewing revision as improvement rather than correction, (7) using webbing to integrate reading and writing across the curriculum. (A sample webbing unit and reference list are appended.) (SKC)

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Integrating Reading and Writing Instruction at the Primary Level

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After years of breaking the teaching of reading and writing into dozens of discrete skills, educators are looking at ways of putting them together again. This paper considers reasons for and approaches to the integration of reading and writing instruction at the primary level. Such integration is beneficial for a number of reasons, most stemming from the complementary nature of reading and writing. The writing and reading back of written material gives purpose to both; the sense of overall purpose enhances reading while the sense of audience enhances writing.

Becoming writers themselves gives students the opportunity "to explore directly both the functions and forms of written language." (Martinez and Teale, 1987) Writing demonstrates directly the encoding function of letters and words, a function children must understand in order to read. Writing also creates purpose for paying attention to other features of written language which must be internalized by readers. These features include associating sounds with letters; the ordering of letter sounds in words; print's proceeding from left to right; the existence of spaces to divide words; and uses of punctuation and spelling to clarify meaning.

Learning reading and writing processes together emphasizes the interdependence of each, building a whole concept of literacy rather than creating the illusion of dividing lines between the two. Having primary children write creates an understanding of authorship and initiates them into the mystery of writing something down for someone else to read later. As an author, a child realizes that words can be manipulated, ideas can be changed. This realization encourages and stimulates interaction with print.

Making writing a part of reading instruction also makes it an everyday event which is less likely to make children feel overwhelmed by the prospect of writing. Another benefit of everyday writing is that the teacher is perhaps more likely to focus on the purpose of writing as the growth of literacy rather than the creation of models of neatness and tidy punctuation.

Writing is meaning-centered in the same way reading is, so writing can develop an understanding of text organization. This in turn helps the primary reader to integrate meaning during reading. (Aulls, 1982) Since the purpose of reading is not simply decoding words, but is understanding what is written, reading comprehension must be seen as a constructive process with the reader responding to the printed text from his own experience and knowledge to reconstruct meaning. Writing for an audience requires the writer to make his work comprehended. This in turn shows him that other writers' intentions are to be understood, to communicate, not just be decoded word by word. The focus stays on gaining meaning.

Building critical literacy requires teachers to "link the nature of learning itself with the dreams, experiences, histories and languages that students bring to the schools." (Giroux, 1987) Through student writing, teachers can better understand those histories and experiences of students, while students have the opportunity to explore literacy as both an encoding activity of filling a blank page with personal meaning and a decoding function of discovering the meaning another author has laid out on the printed page.

The value of integrating reading and writing instruction is clear. How this is best done is another question. In terms of teacher behaviors,

an integrated primary program needs the teacher to provide the link between reading and writing. This can be accomplished when the teacher acts as a reading and writing model, reading regularly to students, sharing her writing with students, encouraging and responding to all student attempts to read and write, and providing time for independent reading and writing for all students. (Martinez and Teale, 1987) It is important that these be provided every day so that children are constantly listening to readings, constantly participating in response activities such as drama, art, or music, constantly visiting the class library to look at or read favorite books. The entire classroom should be a rich setting of written language with an abundance of environmental print including the children's own writing. The experience of being surrounded by written language should be all children's and not reserved for the early readers as enrichment.

The first day of school is the best time to start primary students writing. According to Martinez and Teale, this makes the activity a part of the new year, no more amazing or threatening than anything else in the new environment. Children are more likely to resist writing even a few weeks into the year. A pre-writing experience that is novel and motivating helps: feltboard stories, creative dramatics, or cooking are some possibilities. Following the activity, the teacher acts as a pre-writing facilitator: talking with students about the experience and serving as audience and recorder of words and ideas. It is important to give students time to familiarize themselves with the material before beginning to write; this allows them to begin organizing their ideas before writing. (Spiegel, 1987) After writing, students should read back what they have written on the same day. This can be done with the

teacher, in pairs, small groups, or the whole class. This is especially important for younger or less well-developed writers because it increases their view of themselves as authors and develops an understanding of the distinctions and connections between oral and written language. (Martinez and Teale, 1987)

Writing topics should cover a broad range. They can be teacher-assigned or personally selected and should include personal narrative, storytelling, lists, letters and invitations. Writing beyond the writing center further integrates writing into the real world. Providing blank paper and round pencils with soft lead in the housekeeping area can encourage a restaurant game of writing down orders and creating menus, for example. (Martinez and Teale, 1987) Writing functional pieces such as invitations to a play is highly motivating and reinforces the connection between reading and writing and the real world.

Donald Graves's stress on the creation of a studio atmosphere is important with young children. In such an atmosphere, the craft of writing can flourish. A studio atmosphere is created when children know how to help each other, materials are readily available, and writing is an on-going activity, not just a series of assignments which are finished in one sitting. In this atmosphere, the teacher serves a number of roles including facilitator, audience, consultant, but never director. The children's writing is their own property and their own responsibility. (Graves, 1983)

In Reading Horizons, Spiegel suggests a number of ways to help students prepare to write. These pre-composing activities help young writers organize their thoughts and make sure they have the information and vocabulary they need to be successful writers on their chosen

subjects. One approach is similar to the language experience reading lesson. Prior to writing, the shared experience is discussed with the class to bring details and concepts of that experience to the surface. Writing then occurs. If the topic is a familiar one, brainstorming alone can be enough to prepare children to write. During brainstorming, relevant vocabulary is highlighted. When recorded by the teacher and put on display, this vocabulary serves two functions: first, it reduces spelling anxiety, and, second, it helps children recall the ideas they need for their writing.

Mapping is another approach to preparing for writing. For this, major concepts are laid out in a schematic way with vocabulary and organization visually mapped on a large chart or blackboard. Notecards can be used in a similar way with each idea recorded on a 3 x 5 card which can be moved around until the arrangement suits the writer. These devices free the young writer from the tedium of re-writing while they involve him physically in the process of organizing and refining his topic.

When children are to write on an assigned topic such as a shared experience, it is important that the teacher's questions during pre-composing time allow more than one correct answer. Many times children mistakenly feel that there is a single right way to write about a given subject. They need to know that there are as many right ways as there are writers. This can be accomplished by asking questions that accept any remotely reasonable approach. According to Spiegel, this kind of questioning promotes creativity, increases risk-taking, and encourages revision.

Creativity is promoted by the child's sense that ideas can be changed, that books or stories could have different endings. Semantic

webbing is one way to emphasize this; a story is read to the point where different endings are possible and children are asked, "What could happen next? What will this character do next?" All possible responses are "webbed" on the board. This activity is a good reading activity, too, as it stresses prediction and looks for meaning in the piece. As children gain confidence in their ability to generate good ideas, the activity can be changed to a writing assignment where children finish the story with either one of the endings suggested in class or an original one.

To help children want to revise, it is important that revision be viewed by the teacher and students as improvement, not correction, of the piece. (Spiegel, 1987) This way, specific goals, such as writing more interesting sentences or using more descriptive words, can be set without implying that there was anything wrong with the writing before revision.

In Children's Language and the Language Arts, Carol J. Fisher and C. Ann Terry suggest the use of webbing to integrate writing and reading across the curriculum. Based on their model, there follows a web of activities for use a primary classroom:

Topic - CHANGES

Reading experiences:

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle
Miss Rumphius, Barbara Cooney
Our Change World, Ingrid Selberg (revolving picture book)
"Change", Charlotte Zolotow (poem)
"Sam's Place", Lilian Moore (poem)
Little House on the Prairie, Laura Ingalls Wilder
When You Were a Baby, Ann Jonas
The Little House, Virginia Lee Burton
The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams
The Year at Maple Hill Farm, Alice & Martin Provensen

Writing experiences:

Write words for personal dictionaries
Write/dictate "When I was small . . ."
Keep record of caterpillar/butterfly changes

Writing experiences (continued):

Use mixed colors to paint a rainbow and write poem/caption for the painting
Dramatize a part of Little House on the Prairie
Write and illustrate a story of change
Fill in captions of cartoons with blank balloons
Write a news report on something that changes

Art:

Mix primary colors to make new colors
Origami (change paper to sculpture)

Developing thinking skills:

Brainstorm list of things that change
Classify as occurring naturally or caused by outside influences or
as beneficial, harmful, or neutral in effect

Vocabulary development:

Keep personal dictionary of names of things that change
Record sensory words describing changes in nature (i.e. leaves turn red,
become dry, crisp, light)
Play "concentration" with change words

Math:

Make growth charts for each student to keep

Science:

Plant popcorn, predict and watch changes through glass jar, measure growth
Collect monarch butterfly larvae, feed until chrysalis forms, release
butterflies
Fill small jar with popcorn, add water to rim, place plastic saucer on
top: what happens in an hour? overnight?

From this web, the following week of integrated language arts might occur in a second grade classroom, midway through the year. Integrating reading and writing in a unit such as this will develop both reading and writing skills. Reading will provide topic, voice, story grammar for the writing, while writing will give purpose to and direct involvement with reading.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Read-aloud: The Year at Maple Hill Farm (place in class library after reading) Class Meeting: Talk about changes that have occurred during year. Change will be topic of talking, reading, writing for next weeks. Each child writes 2-4 words about changing of seasons, perhaps from book or from own experience. Compile on blackboard. Children write words they want to keep in personal dictionaries. Writing time -- if another piece in progress, child works to complete it. New topic is seasonal changes. Other Instruction End of day: Start reading aloud Little House on the Prairie.	Collect monarch larvae. Label jars. Each child chooses one or more to keep records on. (Record sheet provided) Read-aloud: The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Free reading from "change" section of class library. Other Instruction Mix primary colors to change to new ones. Use to paint rainbow & write poem/caption for painting. Children read poem or captions individually to class and post on board. Brainstorm & record sensory words that describe changes in nature. End of day: Continue with Little House.	Record changes in caterpillars. Students read When You Were a Baby silently. Class discussion of changes since children were babies. Students write "When I Was Small . . ." Share writing in small groups; then as class, what new things? What is true of most? Other Instruction In pairs or groups, children use change vocabulary words to play concentration or bingo. Origami: Change paper into a butterfly. End of day: Continue with Little House	Record changes in caterpillars. Miss Rumphius: shared book Children use their copies of Miss R to select 3 or more words to add to their dictionaries. Write and illustrate a story of change: can be from class experiences or not. Share change stories in pairs, receiving and asking "audience" questions. Place in writing folders for revision. Other Instruction Fill small jar with popcorn, fill to rim with water, plastic saucer on top. What will happen in an hour? By tomorrow morning? End of day: Continue with Little House.	Record changes in caterpillars. Predict which, if any, chrysalises will produce butterflies by Monday. Free reading from "change" section of class library. Other Instruction For each student, place paper towels in glass jar. Place 4-5 popcorn kernels between toweling and glass and add 2 T water. What will happen? Whole class devises a prediction/recording sheet for this experiment (Have dittoed for Monday) Work on change stories. In small groups, choose an event in Little House to dramatize for the rest of the class.

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